



The Semi-Formal Learning Pathway at Shaftesbury Victoria School

After completing EYFS, learners at Shaftesbury Victoria School follow one of three learning pathways – Pre-Formal, Semi-Formal or Formal. The Semi-Formal pathway is for those who have moderate to severe learning difficulties. These learners are developing emergent skills and may be able to access aspects of the National Curriculum, but will need a more holistic approach to access learning. Semi-Formal learners require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and their care, and are likely to need some sensory support with their curriculum broken down into small steps.

The school ensures that there is fluidity between pathways, allowing for a personalised approach, that enables pupils to benefit from approaches from other pathways and to move between pathways as appropriate to their development.

Most Semi-Formal learners will stay with us until Y13 and will progress on to local colleges or other providers for further preparation for adult life.

All our Semi-Formal pupils follow timetables that are broken down into 5 faculty areas:

- **Communication:** literacy, phonics, reading, writing, speaking and listening and speech and language therapy
- **Maths:** numeracy, thinking skills and problem solving
- **Citizenship:** topic lessons, life skills, PSHE and occupational health therapy
- **Enrichment:** option subjects for post 16, expressive arts and LEAP
- **Physical wellbeing:** PE, Swimming and physiotherapy

(Please see faculty documentation for detailed information on curriculum content and sequencing)

Intent – What are we trying to achieve through our Semi-Formal Curriculum?

The Semi-Formal pathway aims to provide a curriculum that delivers LIFE: a love of learning, promotion of independence, a focus on the future and high quality enrichment. **In order to implement our LIFE intent, the Semi-Formal pathway prioritises the development of communication skills and life skills.** These skills are delivered discretely through lessons, but also permeate all aspects of the curriculum.

The curriculum will:

Inspire a love of learning through:

- developing learners' levels of engagement by finding out what interests and motivates them
- Igniting curiosity
- equipping and supporting learners to persist through difficulties and setbacks
- supporting learners to grasp new opportunities



Promote independence through:

- providing explicit instructions and sufficient time for learners to repeat, practise, maintain and consolidate skills to develop independence
- providing the appropriate degree of scaffolding to lead learners to greater independence
- building self-esteem and confidence
- developing a sense of belonging and of importance to support them to contribute to society
- fostering self-reliance, allowing learners to feel they have control over their life

Focus on the future through:

- making explicit reference to how learning is relevant to life
- linking learning to life skills
- maximising opportunities to experience and interact with the wider community

Provide high quality enrichment through:

- offering a wide range of enrichment opportunities through our LEAP Programme
- a comprehensive expressive arts curriculum offer delivered by specialist teachers and involving a range of specialist visitors and enrichment visits
- Themed weeks off timetable in sport and expressive arts
- A wide range of trips and external visitors to enrich aspects of the taught curriculum

Implementation - All our Semi-Formal learners will be learning at every opportunity through:

Lessons that are underpinned by the following learning approaches:

Learning Approach	How this is applied to the Semi-Formal pathway
Contextual Learning	While assessment frameworks may make use of National Curriculum objectives, learning in the Semi-Formal pathway is rooted in contextual learning. This involves using students' interests, experiences and prior knowledge to inform and guide learning and promote a love of learning that is relevant and applicable to the future.
Functional Activities	Relating learning to day-to-day activities that have purposeful relevance to students' lives is a core approach in the semi-formal pathway. Life Skills lessons address this directly, but preparing students for future life is a priority in all lessons and all wider learning experiences.



Total Communication	Knowing an individual's preferred communication methods is vital to all pathways. In the Semi-Formal pathway this will be bespoke to the individual and will involve, where appropriate, symbols alongside verbal prompts, Makaton, objects of reference, visualisers, touch communication, BSL, Clicker and Tassels.
Attention Autism	Appropriate stages of Attention Autism intervention are used in the Semi-Formal pathway to engage attention, improve joint attention and develop shared enjoyment in group activities. This approach also aims to encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting, increase non-verbal and verbal communication through commenting and build a wealth and depth of vocabulary. The ultimate aim is for work to be completed with increasing autonomy and independence.
Sensory stories	<p>Students in the Semi-Formal pathway benefit from a sensory approach. This will include adapted stories with visual, auditory and touch stimuli that offer an immersive experience.</p> <p>Allows the students to access and engage with a theme and provides a multi-sensory experience.</p>
Call and response	A teacher's 'call' followed by an agreed and practiced 'response' from all students can serve many functions in a semi-formal classroom. For example, it may make a transition from an activity to an instruction or be used to reinforce new information by using call and response for teachers.
Assessment for learning/observation	In <i>Seven Myths of Education</i> (2014), Daisy Christodoulou refers to the need for teachers to be 'thermostats, not thermometers' – not just taking a measurement of where a student is, but making changes depending on where they need to be'. In the Semi-Formal pathway, learning is continually assessed using a wide range of strategies and adaptations to teaching made accordingly.
Structured Play	Play is important in the Semi-Formal learning journey, and structuring play maximises learning opportunities. In the semi-formal pathway, this will involve using timers and countdowns, choosing boards and songs for different activities during the day.



Sabotage/recognition of a problem	The sabotage technique involves creating problems or obstructions in a learning process that the learner has to communicate, with varying degrees of support, to overcome. This method teaches the steps to approaching a problem and gives learners exposure to a wide range of types of problems. Once generalised, this allows learners to relate novel problems to a problem they have previously solved in order to find a solution.
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In addition to discrete lessons, Semi-Formal learners will learn through:

- **Community links** that include: trips out, external visitors, outdoor learning, involvement in the school radio and school council
- **SMSC** that includes: assemblies, the rewards ladder, PSHE, social stories, links with the local church
- **Personalised learning:** that includes PLPs, based on EHCPs being central to all learning, therapy goals, personalised communication strategies and zones of regulation
- **Therapy Provision** that includes: integrated therapies (SaLT, Physio and OT), individual therapy sessions, nursing provision, ELSA support, rebound swimming and hydrotherapy

Impact – What difference is our curriculum making?

We know our curriculum is impacting because:

- Learners communicate that they love their learning, are encouraged to be independent, that they are equipped for the future and that their lives are improved through enrichment activities.
- Learning walks demonstrate that students are actively engaged in all aspects of learning.
- Planning, observation and discussion demonstrate that the curriculum is well planned and thoughtfully sequenced in all areas.
- Planning, observation and discussion demonstrate that the curriculum provides appropriate stretch and challenge for all learning.
- EfL demonstrates high quality recording of learning journeys.
- Our assessment strategies and tracking systems (EfL, Assessment books, PLP reviews and annual EHCP reviews) show that students are making progress in line with or exceeding expectations.
- Assessment systems and tracking systems are regularly and rigorously moderated and monitored to ensure consistency and quality.
- External accreditation in the form of entry level qualifications and AQA Unit awards are successfully completed for all appropriate students.